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ABSTRACT

Intended to help students improve their written work by their active involvement and by their interest in investing the time and energy necessary to create a finished product of quality, this booklet presents a structured process that teaches children to progress from a draft to a "published" stage, through individual editing, peer editing, conferring with the teacher, and using other skills of revision. After a brief introduction, the booklet discusses the following steps in the writing process: (1) preparing rough copy; (2) editing for spelling, punctuation, and capitalization; (3) revising--expanding details, ideas, and descriptions; (4) paragraphing; (5) making a cover; (6) preparing the final copy; and (7) displaying the books in the classroom. The latter portion of the booklet describes four sessions for training student editors and contains a "publishing" schedule. (HTH)

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Producing Classroom Authors

Grades K-6

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FOREWORD

Writing is the process of selecting, combining, arranging and developing ideas in effective sentences, paragraphs, and often, longer units of discourse. Writing can be a deeply personal act of shaping our perception of the world and our relationships to people and other things in that world. Thus, writing serves both public and personal needs of students, and it warrants the full, generous and continuing effort of all teachers.

To provide guidance and assistance to teachers, in helping young writers develop and edit their pieces of writing, the Illinois State Board of Education greatly appreciates the contribution of this booklet by the author, Ms. Kathy Wessels, Olive School, Arlington Heights District Number 25 to the teachers of Illinois.

Donald G. Gill

Donald G. Gill
State Superintendent of Education

INTRODUCTION

"These papers are so messy, I can't read them."

"Why don't my students even attempt to do a neat job?"

"I can't understand it; these students know how to spell and use correct punctuation--WHY DON'T THEY USE IT IN THEIR WRITING?"

These are concerns teachers face when work is handed in to them. As teachers grade or read written assignments, their frustration grows when they realize that students are not making effective use of what they know about writing. Sometimes the quality is so poor that the teacher returns the paper with a perfunctory, "Do this again. I know you can do better." Other times the paper is returned full of corrections and instructing the student to try to do better next time. Unfortunately, neither method is strong, motivationally or instructionally; therefore, the next writing assignment shows little or no growth.

"Producing Classroom Authors" presents a structured process which teaches children to progress from a draft to a finished-product stage by individual editing, peer editing, conferring with the teacher, and using other skills of revision. This process is referred to as "publishing" and deals with the post-writing stage of the writing process. It assumes that pre-writing and writing have preceded it. The purpose is to improve students' written work by actively involving them. Publishing gives students a reason to invest the time and energy necessary to create a finished product of quality. The teacher sets expectations for success by making something special of the "published" results like a bulletin board display, a Young Authors' Conference, an assembly, or submission to a publisher.

The publishing process has been used with children who have a broad range of abilities. It has been successful with excellent writers as well as with students with learning disabilities. It is not a quick and easy process; however, it is one for which children show enthusiasm the first time they complete a book. As the year progresses, the teacher should see improvement in students' writing.

STEP I: WRITE A STORY: ROUGH COPY

First, teachers and students should understand that the first draft is a rough copy. Even for adults, it is extremely rare to write a "finished product" the first time through. There are revisions, reworking, editing, and finally a polished version. Therefore, we should assume that the major portion of students' work is submitted in rough copy form and can be treated as such. Work that is "published" is that which will be used for display or in some way made public. "Publishing" is not done with every piece of writing the child produces, but should be a special event that happens periodically in the classroom.

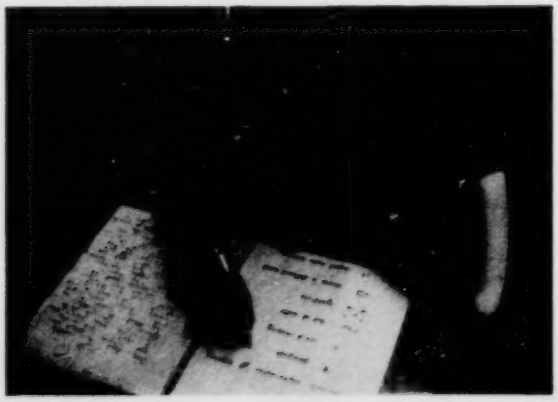
Second, students should help decide which story will be published. This can be accomplished by having students keep a classroom file of the stories they write during the year. They can then select the story with which they will work. Teachers can also encourage children to publish stories that they consider to have creative, original ideas.

In order to introduce students to publishing, the teacher should first select short writings so that students can learn the process. Very little editing for content is done initially. Rather, the emphasis is on developing students' ability to edit for mechanics. Students acquire the impression that the teacher values the effort expended in writing. Students also become aware of why they are publishing.

STEP II: EDIT FOR SPELLING, PUNCTUATION, AND CAPITALIZATION

Once it has been decided which story will be published, it is important to involve students in the initial stages of editing. Since the students were concentrating on getting their ideas on paper during the writing process, they may notice spelling and punctuation errors when they edit. Therefore, they should carefully read through their own stories to correct all the errors they can find. Stories can be traded with a friend who will also help find and correct mechanical errors. Stories are then given to the teacher who underlines spelling words and circles letters that need to be capitalized. The student makes the actual corrections.

It is helpful to use one of the student's stories on an overhead projector and go through the editing process together. This increases students' awareness of the types of mistakes that they should watch for in their writing. It also lets them know that they are not alone in making these kinds of mistakes and that it is through proofreading and editing that mistakes are corrected. This is also a good time to familiarize students with editing symbols that teachers and peer editors may be using when they edit stories.



STEP III: REVISE, EXPAND DETAILS, IDEAS, DESCRIPTION

The teacher prepares for a conference with the student by reading the story and completing the story evaluation form.

STORY EVALUATION

Title: _____ Editor: _____
Author: _____

I liked these ideas:

Organization: (Beginning -
(Middle -
(End -

I like how you described:

I'd like more details about:

It's important to begin the conference on a positive note. This lets the student know that the teacher likes what has been done so far and that the goal is to make his/her story better.

The conference itself should be held in a relaxed atmosphere with as much privacy as possible. The teacher should keep the following rules for editors in mind:

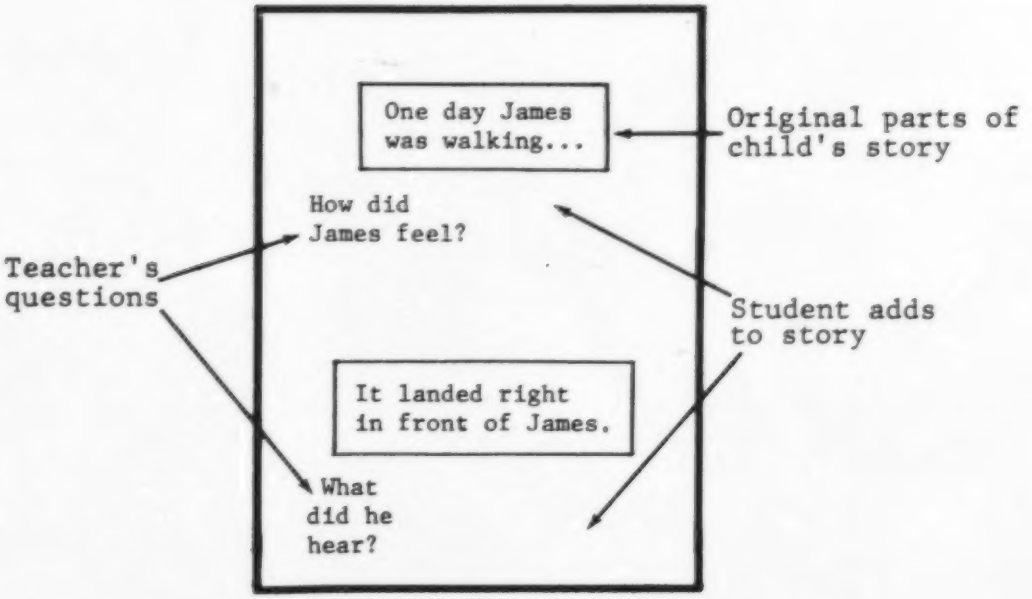
- Be sensitive to the author's feelings and privacy.
- Know the age and abilities of the authors. They may not understand your comment because they haven't learned about it yet.
- Use the author's words, not yours. Be more concerned with what is said, rather than how it is said.
- Make corrections and comments in the presence of the author.

Begin the conference by letting the author know what you liked about the story. Comments should span the whole piece to let the author know you are indeed familiar with what was written. Explain carefully that there are some places in which you would like to know more. Ask permission to help the author expand the story and to help with some corrections.

The next phase of the conference deals with literally "cutting apart" the story. Materials needed: scissors, tape, and 11x15 manila paper. As you read through the story with the student, stop when you get to a part that lends itself to added description or that is unclear. Ask for clarification from the student, cut the story at this point, tape to manila paper, and leave room for the author to add what was discussed.

SAMPLE: One day James was walking down the street and then James saw a missile. It landed right in front of James.

The teacher might ask questions like: What did the missile look like?
What did James feel when he saw a missile?
What did he hear, smell?


One day James was walking...
Original parts of child's story
How did James feel?
Teacher's questions
Student adds to story
It landed right in front of James.
What did he hear?

Revised sample:

One day James was walking down the street. James saw a missile. It was bright, shiny red, with 17 power boosters and 20 fuel tanks. James was very scared. Suddenly the missile landed right in front of James. He smelled a very funny smell. It smelled like burned steak.

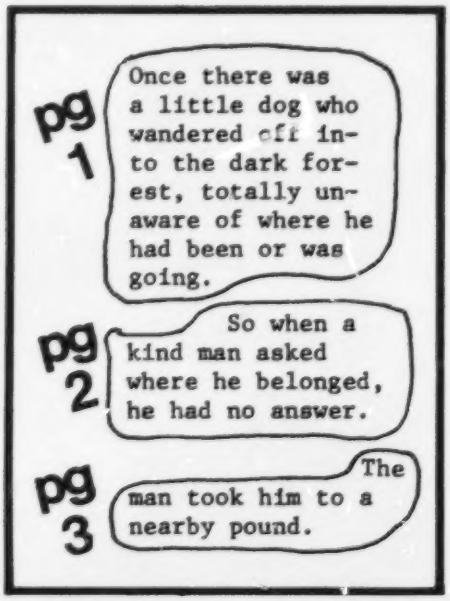
Continue through the story in this manner, leaving space for added ideas and writing questions in the margin for the student's reference. Be sure the student understands that added material must be in sentence form. Ask the student to write in the added details and description independently and return for another conference.

Final editing for mechanics is next and can be done with the teacher or independently, depending on the capabilities of the student.

PART IV: PARAGRAPHING

Once all the editing is completed, it is time to decide where to divide paragraphs. Tell students they will be illustrating the things that happen in their stories. Ask them to reread their stories to decide which sentences go together to make a good picture. Ask them to look for groups of sentences that describe each thing that happens. Then they should draw a large circle around those sentences.

Paragraphs


pg 1
Once there was a little dog who wandered off into the dark forest, totally unaware of where he had been or was going.
pg 2
So when a kind man asked where he belonged, he had no answer.
pg 3
The man took him to a nearby pound.

STEP V: MAKE A COVER

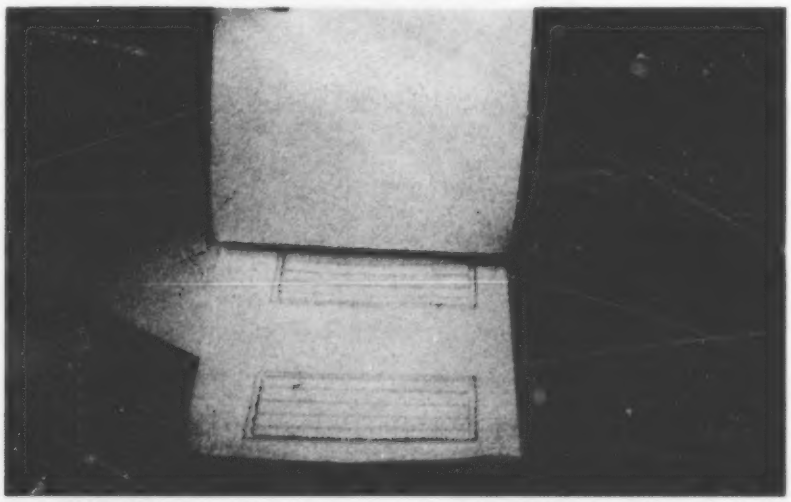
This activity is placed in the middle of the process in order to give students a break from their hard work and serve as an incentive for finishing the remaining steps. The cover should be one that can be made by the student, rather than an adult.

One method is to use an 11" x 18" sheet of folded construction paper. The artwork for the front cover can be done in paint, tissue paper, torn scraps of construction paper, or markers. Then completed covers can be laminated. This gives the cover more substance, as well as making it look special to the child.

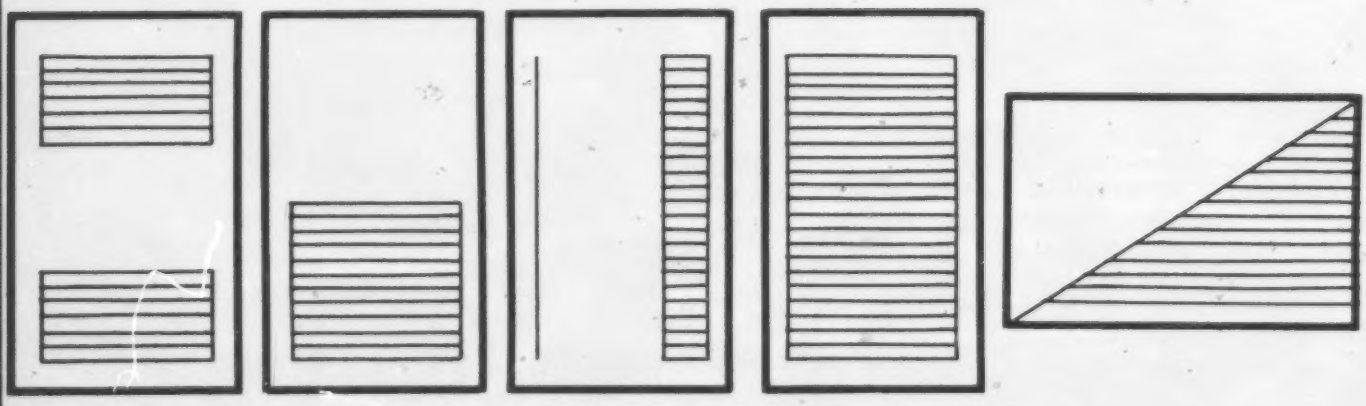
Students should show something from their stories that is funny, exciting, or interesting. Actual book covers can be displayed to demonstrate to students that the title and the author's name are usually included.

STEP VI: MAKE A FINAL COPY

It is this step in the process which makes students feel they are actually publishing. Every effort is made to help students make their books as close to the real thing as possible. Publishing houses do not use lined paper; therefore, students are given unlined 8 1/2 x 11 paper. To aid in neatness and line control, they are given "tracers" which are placed under unlined paper.

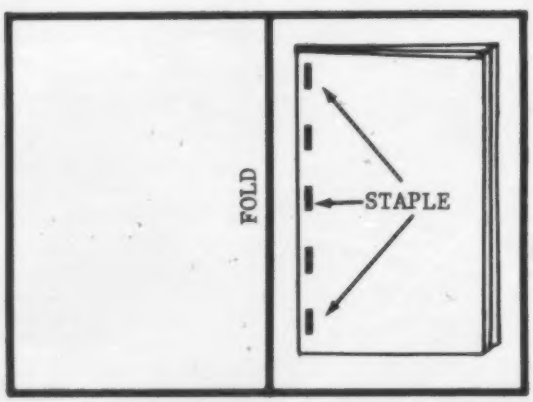


A variety of styles are provided so that students can arrange their illustrations in ways pleasing to them.

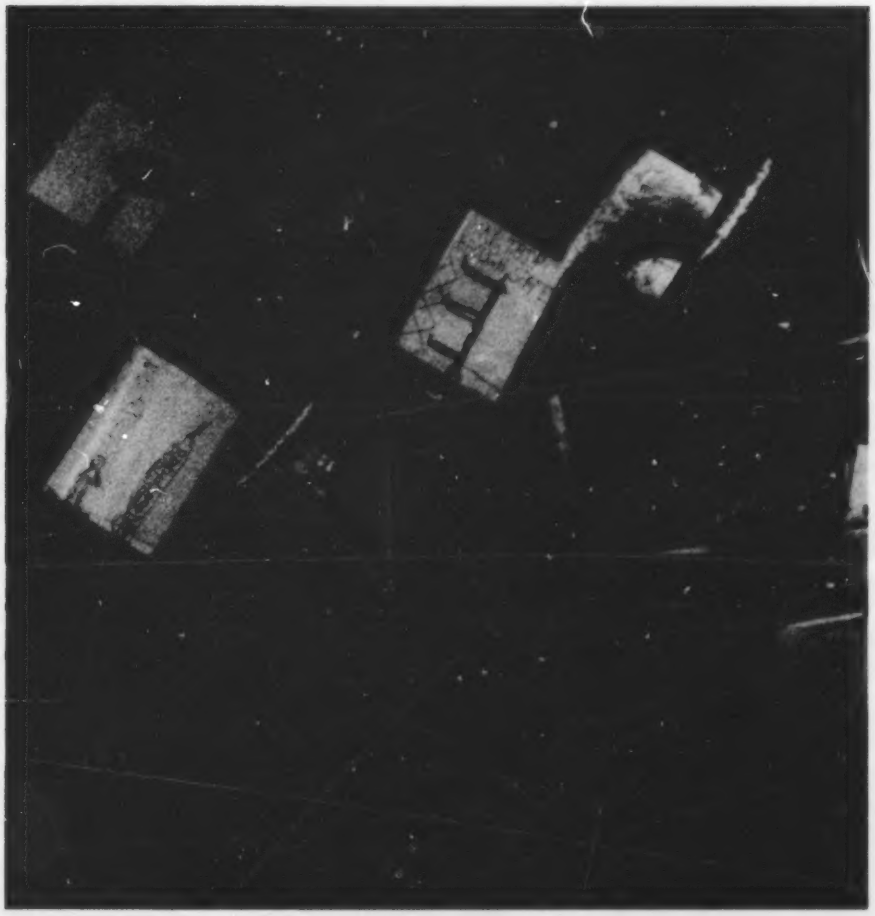


As students begin to copy the final draft, they are asked to use their best printing, placing one paragraph on a page. Older students may use cursive writing or they may type their stories. It is necessary to note that, at best, final drafts will have noticeable mistakes. This is typical and can be remedied by proofreading by the teacher. A small number of mistakes can be accepted as age-typical.

The final steps are to make a title page and to illustrate the book.



STEP VII: PUT COMPLETED BOOKS IN A SPECIAL PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN READ THEM



Sharing is an important key to the success of this project. The students need recognition--lots of it! The teacher can put finished books on display in the classroom. This way classmates can read each other's books. Positive comments flow from one student to another. Authors are reinforced and they typically request to start the project over with the next story they write. Continue to vary the methods used for sharing, taking advantage of all the audiences, child, teacher and other adults, in the school and community.

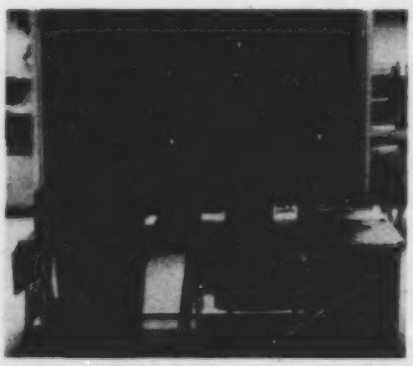
TRAINING STUDENT EDITORS

Using student editors is a natural outgrowth of the "publishing" process. Publishing is so time-consuming that the classroom teacher does not have time to hold conferences and take students through the process as often as the children may wish.

This section deals with training older students to help younger students with editing and extending their stories.

At the beginning, students are chosen on the basis of interest, skills, and the classroom teacher's permission to use class time for the work ahead. It is beneficial to set this up in a workshop format. Take children out of their classroom to increase student editors' feelings of importance. Enthusiasm for the task is heightened because students are working with others who enjoy writing. A group of 10-12 is a workable number of students. These students should be ones who have already been through the publishing process with stories of their own.

A suggested organizational plan for the workshop follows. Each of the four sessions needs approximately one hour.



SESSION I: WHAT IS AN EDITOR?

Begin with a discussion about the publishing process. Some of the following questions might be considered.

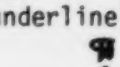
1. How does it feel to have your story edited?
2. What can you say about the difficulty of writing?
3. What did you think of the results of your first publishing effort?
4. What is an editor's job?
5. How might it feel being an editor?

Often children think that an editor looks only at mechanical problems. It is important to emphasize that an editor also suggests changes in the content of the story. Therefore, an author's feelings need to be considered at all times.

In the next part, introduce the children to editing symbols and how to use them. Give students "Editor's Folders" in which they can keep all handouts and materials they will need as editors. Give them a list of simplified editing symbols.

Suggested list:

_____(underline): capitalization and spelling

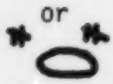
 : paragraph

: word missing

: out of order

" " : quotations

or

 : choose a different word

( )? : doesn't make sense

Practice using the symbols with a sample story on an overhead projector. The mechanical aspect is dealt with first because children typically are anxious to find these errors before they look at content.

Provide students with a copy of the story evaluation form to complete for this sample story. The students may have a difficult time with this because they are not used to looking at what is good about a story. Give them a few examples such as, "I liked the way the broken window was used to increase suspense; I thought the boy with the broken leg was an interesting character whom I'd like to meet."

Allow time for the students to brainstorm positive qualities of the story. Next, consider the organization: is there a beginning, a middle and an end? With the students, summarize these three parts of the story. List descriptions students think are particularly effective. Have students choose one or two places in which additional details would improve the story.

SESSION II: REVISION TECHNIQUES

Provide each student with a copy of the same story. Working in groups of three, the students edit the story for mechanical problems. Give each group one evaluation form telling them to choose a secretary to record comments made by the group.

After the groups have completed their evaluation forms, bring the whole group together. Using the overhead projector, compile the groups' ideas on a story evaluation form.

Provide students with materials needed to "cut apart" the story. Go through the procedure of cutting apart the story with them (See Step III" Revise, Expand, Details, Ideas, Description). Make sure they have several questions for each empty space. Emphasize that they are not to answer these questions; they are only to help the author by generating questions which promote ideas.

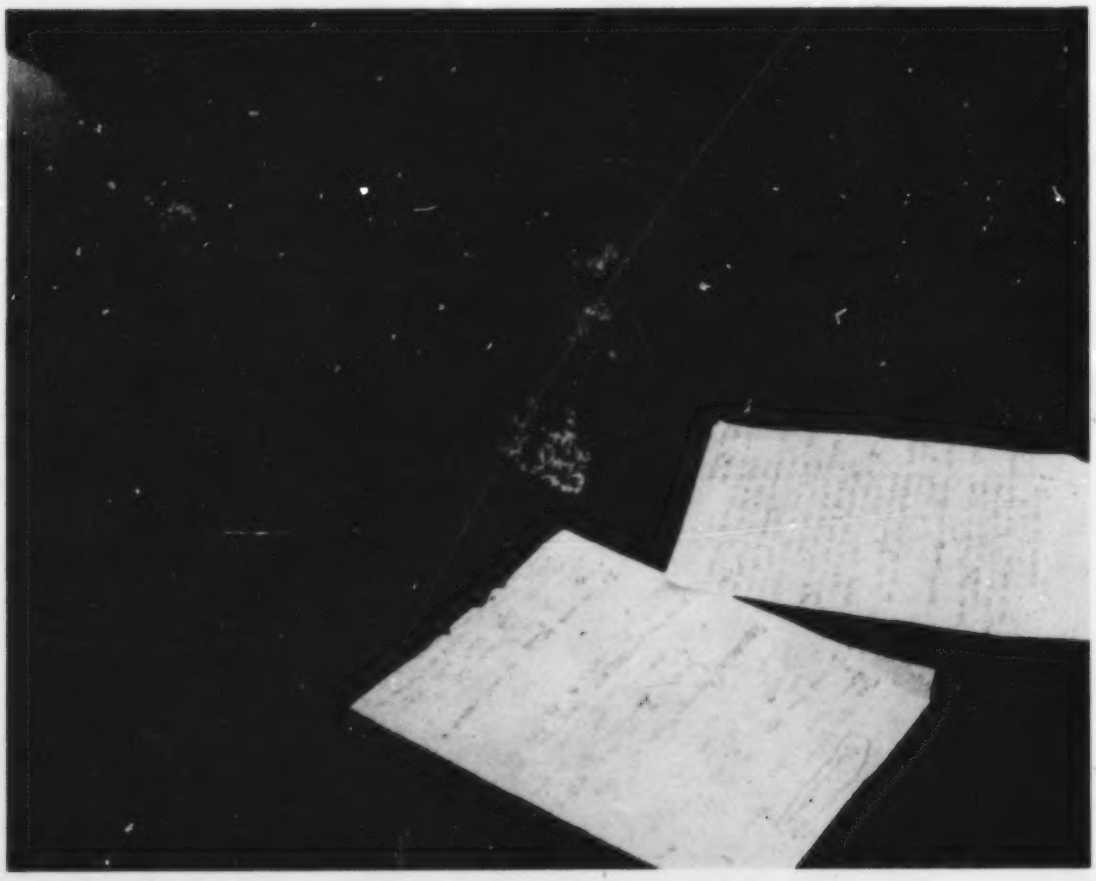
For the above exercise, it is effective to use the rough copy of a story which has previously been published. If a previously published story is used, the teacher can now read the published version of the story. Students will recognize that many of their own questions have been answered in the second draft. This gives them confidence that they can identify undeveloped areas for improvement, similarly to the way in which the teacher does.

SESSION III: PLANNING FOR CONFERENCE

Student editors will spend the third session preparing for the individual editing conferences that they'll hold with the younger authors. They will each be given a rough copy of another student's story to which they will apply the story evaluation form and the cutting process.

Provide students with a copy of "Rules for Editors."

1. Get to know your author.
2. Be sensitive to the author's feelings and privacy.
3. Be sure to notice good description, ideas, imagination, characters, use of senses, etc.
4. Remember the age and abilities of the author. He or she may not understand your comment because they haven't learned about it yet.
5. Use the author's words, not yours. Be more concerned with what is said than how it is said.
6. Make corrections and comments in the presence of the author.

Discuss each rule, emphasizing that being an editor is an important responsibility. Stress that critical comments should be kept to a minimum. Review what was done in the last session concerning positive comments and the process of cutting apart the story. Allow time for students to edit and plan for a conference. The editors will probably need help from the teacher in making sure they have enough questions.

SESSION IV: HOLDING THE CONFERENCE

Give editors a copy of "Schedule for Publishing." Discuss the steps. Follow-up sessions will be scheduled in order for editors to complete the publishing process with their authors. Before authors arrive, discuss editors' feelings about meeting with authors. Typically they are nervous and need reassurance that they know what to do. Emphasize that they should begin the conferences by getting to know their authors. This eases tension in both the author and the editor. Remind them to explain what was done to the story and why it was done before they show the authors their cut-up stories.

Provide additional sessions for the authors to complete the publishing process.

Follow-up: Make sure an adult reads the revised story before the final copy is made. Set a deadline to finish. Plan a display.

SCHEDULE FOR PUBLISHING

Author _____

Author's Teacher _____

Editor _____

Editor's Teacher _____

Story _____

When we plan to meet	Done		
		1.	Edit
		2.	Plan conference
		3.	Hold conference
			a. Session I
			b. Session II if needed
		4.	Paragraphing (sentences that go together for pictures)
		5.	Cover
		6.	Adult reads and ok's draft
		7.	Copy and illustrate
		8.	Title page
		9.	Display

Plan with your teacher and author's teacher.